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# PEACEKEEPING ABROAD, TROUBLE MAKING AT HOME: MUTINIES IN WEST AFRICA

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## ABSTRACT

This article draws attention to a trend in which military deployments as part of peacekeeping missions have triggered army mutinies in some West African countries. It explains how participation in peacekeeping missions created new material grievances and a sense of injustice amongst the peacekeepers, which under certain conditions sparked domestic mutinies. These uprisings in West Africa follow a history of military disobedience in the region, and the article places them into the context of long-standing tensions within military organizations. Mutinies often symbolize and intensify divisions within armed forces, which can lead to further instability even after the mutiny is resolved. Therefore, it is important for those interested in building and maintaining effective militaries to understand the ways in which deployments and peacekeeping participation can contribute to unrest within the armed forces. The article draws on interviews with former mutineers, including peacekeepers, and others military personnel in West Africa, as well as media reporting including public statements made by mutineers, academic writings, and archival research.

PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS IN AFRICA by the United Nations, regional organizations, and sub-regional organizations increased dramatically after the end of the Cold War. Between 1990 and 2009 approximately sixty different peacekeeping operations were deployed in Africa and the majority of African states have contributed troops to one or more peacekeeping mission.<sup>1</sup> Although there are a wide variety of types of peace operations, the overall goal of peacekeeping is to help create the conditions in which conflicts can be managed and ultimately resolved. However, there has been a growing awareness of unintended consequences of these missions, some of which threaten to undermine the goals of the peace operations.<sup>2</sup> Scholars and international organizations have raised awareness regarding peacekeeper involvement in sexual exploitation, trading in conflict minerals, and arms trafficking, while studies on peacekeeping economies have noted rises in commodity prices and disparities of incomes related to peacekeeping missions.<sup>3</sup>

This article identifies and examines an unintended consequence of peacekeeping missions that has not yet received attention: peacekeeping-related mutinies. While peacekeepers are meant to contribute to the resolution of foreign conflicts, a pattern of mutinies following peacekeeping missions indicates that at times their participation can lead to new grievances and exacerbate existing tensions within the contributing country's military. Thus, peacekeeping abroad may contribute to new problems at home bases.

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<sup>1</sup> Paul D. Williams, 'Peacekeeping in Africa after the Cold War: Trends and challenges,' in James Hentz (ed.), *Routledge handbook of African security* (Routledge, New York, 2014), p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Chiyuki Aoi, Cedric de Coning and Ramesh Thakur (eds) *Unintended consequences of peacekeeping operations* (United Nations University Press, New York, NY, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Paul D. Williams, *War & conflict in Africa* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 2011), p. 202.

The trend of mutinies following deployments identified in this article draws on data collected as part of a larger project on mutinies. The project developed the first dataset of mutinies in West Africa since independence, using media reporting, academic writings, and archival material.<sup>4</sup> The research involved interviews with former mutineers, including peacekeepers, and other military personnel in Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, and The Gambia during 2011 and 2012, as well as casual conversations with soldiers in Guinea and Mali during 2012.<sup>5</sup> These first-hand accounts gathered through field research are supplemented with statements broadcast through the media by soldiers during the mutiny or when threatening to mutiny. This perspective from the lower ranks is one that has often been neglected within research on African militaries but is key to comprehending how militaries function, and particularly in understanding internal struggles which can threaten their ability to function effectively.<sup>6</sup>

There have been at least ten mutinies in West Africa since 1991 related to grievances by soldiers who participated in peacekeeping missions, with several other revolts linked to internal deployments.<sup>7</sup> There is also a trend of West African peacekeepers approaching the media to threaten their hierarchy with mutiny, giving their senior leadership a chance to respond to soldier grievances before a revolt is carried out. The pattern of mutinies following peacekeeping participation has occurred in eight West African countries, indicating that it is not simply the matter of one country's policies. Additionally, mutinies have followed missions led by the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), suggesting that the problems cannot be attributed to one funding or organizational body. This article focuses on West Africa, in part because the region has already endured numerous deployment-related mutinies, but also because West Africa's significant contributions to peacekeeping missions places it at risk for future deployment-related mutinies. As of October 2014, 13 of the top 25 troop contributing countries to UN missions were West African states and the region accounts for 11 of the top 25 contributors of police forces.<sup>8</sup>

While this article focuses specifically on West African militaries from the 1990s onward, the pattern is not limited to this time period or region. For example, Ghanaian troops mutinied in 1961 while participating in a UN mission to the Congo. Similarly, Burundian troops mutinied in 2009 over grievances related to their participation in the African Union mission to Somalia. Mutinies have also occurred amongst African police forces involved in international peacekeeping.

This article defines mutiny as 'an act of collective insubordination, in which troops revolt against lawfully constituted authority' to express their communal complaints.<sup>9</sup> The first part of the article explains how mutinies in an African context typically involve both material complaints and a sense of injustice. It demonstrates that mutinies in West Africa follow a long history of military disobedience in this region and must be understood in the context of long-standing tensions within military organizations. The second section details common grievances among deployed or recently deployed soldiers and shows how these complaints often feed into a wider narrative of class gaps between the ranks. The article then demonstrates how peacekeeping missions provide a unique opportunity for rank and file soldiers to compare their conditions to soldiers from throughout the region. This can often lead to accusations of injustice due to the pay and condition discrepancies within countries and between

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<sup>4</sup> Maggie Dwyer, 'Anticipating the revolt: Trends in military mutinies in West and Central Africa, 1960-2012' (University of Edinburgh, unpublished PhD dissertation, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, the identification of the military interviewees has been kept anonymous throughout the article.

<sup>6</sup> Eboe Hutchful and Abdoulaye Bathily, 'Introduction,' in Eboe Hutchful and Abdoulaye Bathily (eds), *The military and militarism in Africa* (CODESRIA, Dakar, 1998), p. VI; Robin Luckham, 'The military, militarisation and democratisation in Africa: A survey of literature and issues,' in Hutchful and Bathily (eds), *The military and militarism in Africa*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>7</sup> These ten cases include: Benin (2000), Burkina Faso (1999), Cote d'Ivoire (1999), Chad (2013), Gambia (1991, 1992), Guinea (1996), Guinea Bissau (2004), Nigeria (2000, 2008).

<sup>8</sup> United Nations, 'Current Contributions to UN Peacekeeping,' May 2014, available at <<http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors.shtml>> (17 November 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Elihu Rose, 'The anatomy of mutiny,' *Armed Forces and Society* 8, 4 (1982), p. 561.

contingents from different contributing countries. The last section analyses how deployments create a strong sense of unit cohesion alongside feelings of division from the larger hierarchy, a dynamic that is conducive to mutiny. This research provides a fresh perspective of African militaries by focusing on the perceptions and experiences of junior soldiers. It shows the diverse influences that shape mutineers' decision to revolt against their leaders. The analysis highlights the divisions and contestations that can form within armed forces engaged in international peacekeeping, challenging the assumption that peacekeeping is beneficial to the militaries involved.

### *Understanding mutinies*

Generally, mutinies are viewed by military authorities and non-specialists as being primarily sparked by 'basic and immediate' material issues such as pay, living conditions, and food.<sup>10</sup> They are regularly interpreted as straightforward, instantaneous reactions, often caused by the stress of war conditions.<sup>11</sup> However, most of the deployment-related mutinies examined in this article did not occur while soldiers were on the deployment but rather after they returned home, often months after the deployment had ended. Thus, the action cannot be attributed to immediate stresses of combat conditions such as fear, mental fatigue, and sleep deprivation in the way that (primarily Western) combat mutinies are often explained.<sup>12</sup> The tendency by both academics and military hierarchies to focus largely on material grievances related to mutinies may be partially explained by the status of the mutineers within military organizations. Mutineers are generally rank and file soldiers who have historically been less educated and from lower-socioeconomic classes than officer ranks and their actions are often treated as unsophisticated.

There is a growing consensus among mutiny scholars that we must look beyond 'the mundane material grievances that have become cliché' in order to discover the less tangible motivations.<sup>13</sup> A sense of injustice underlies most material grievances expressed through a mutiny. Mutinying soldiers usually draw on values concerning what they believe is unfair treatment or irresponsible behaviour by superiors within a military context. In mutinies related to deployments, the sense of injustice is often related to the soldiers' status as combat veterans. Recently deployed soldiers, both in West Africa and in militaries worldwide, often believe that combat veterans deserve a heightened level of respect for having endured the mission. This is reinforced by military hierarchies with traditions of medals, awards, and other honours given to veterans. The sense of pride associated with deployment experience was also apparent in more subtle ways during field research with soldiers throughout West Africa. During interviews or casual conversations, deployment experiences were regularly one of the first topics that soldiers brought up. On several occasions soldier interviewees made a point to show their physical scars from their deployments. It demonstrated a pride in the combat and physical danger associated with the experience. The respect for veterans among their peers was also apparent in the language used by military interviewees who had not deployed. For example, it was common for soldiers to describe comrades with combat experience as 'battle-tested' or 'battle-hardened'. It was always said with admiration. The material grievances of combat veterans, such as lack of payment or

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<sup>10</sup> Geoffrey Parker, 'Forward' in Jane Hathway (ed.) *Rebellion, repression, reinvention: Mutiny in comparative perspective* (Praeger Publishers, Westport, CT, 2001), p. viii.

<sup>11</sup> Christopher Ankersen, 'Beyond mutiny? – Instrumental and expressive understandings of contemporary "collective indiscipline"' in Craig Leslie Mantle (ed.) *The unwilling and the reluctant: Theoretical perspectives on disobedience in the military* (Canadian Defence Academy Press, Ontario, 2006), p. 123.

<sup>12</sup> Joel Hamby, 'The mutiny wagon wheel: A leadership model for mutiny in combat,' *Armed Forces & Society* 28, 4 (2002), pp. 575-600.

<sup>13</sup> Hathaway, "Introduction" in *Rebellion, repression, reinvention: Mutiny in comparative perspective*, p. XV.

inadequate equipment, are generally viewed as particularly offensive by military personnel due to the hardships and sacrifices of the deployment.

The post-deployment mutinies described in this article should be viewed in the context of a larger pattern of military disobedience in the region. West Africa has the highest rate of coups on the continent, which has shaped the internal dynamics of many militaries.<sup>14</sup> In addition to the direct spoils of office for military officers and units involved in coups, there have often been attempts to stabilize the military through 'buy-outs.'<sup>15</sup> As Samuel Decalo explains, the quest to keep military officers out of politics has led to a 'very visible trade-off of material benefits ... in exchange for political fealty.'<sup>16</sup> As a result, in many 'African states, civil or military, army officers play a major role in the commercial sector' and are considered elites, but these 'enticements ... have mostly benefitted senior officers' and have created sharp class divisions between ranks in the military.<sup>17</sup> While all military hierarchies involve differences in pay and privilege, in a West African context the differences are often extreme. In his analysis of West African militaries, Jimmy Kandehe notes:

Ordinary soldiers observe and take exception to the sudden embourgeoisment of their officers, which many have come to rightly believe occurs at their expense. Resentment based upon perceptions that officers are 'stiffing' the ranks, 'chopping them small', and siphoning their supplies has often been the center of the grievance narrative of subaltern mutineers and insurgents.<sup>18</sup>

The following analysis of post-deployment mutinies builds on the work of Kandehe, as well as others scholars such as Robin Luckham and Michael Lofchie, who have also emphasized the significance of class differences within African military structures.<sup>19</sup> It demonstrates that the material grievances of mutineers who have recently deployed are often closely linked to suspicions and resentment over the conditions of the junior ranks compared to the senior officers. As examples from West Africa will illustrate, mutineers' complaints of delays in salary or inadequate equipment are also regularly accompanied by claims that superiors have 'sliced' money meant for troop salary or welfare. Similarly, discrepancies in peacekeeping pay are regularly viewed by the junior ranks as evidence of officer malpractice. Deployments often aggravate the long-standing resentments by placing mostly rank and file soldiers in hardship conditions while the senior hierarchy typically remains at home bases.

### *Deployment-specific grievances*

When soldiers deploy, whether within their own borders to counter an internal threat or internationally, there are likely to be complications that are not present when at their home bases. For some, peacekeeping missions may provoke an image of soldiers deployed to an environment that is tense but in which the conflict has been largely contained. However, many of the peacekeeping missions in which West African troops have partaken occur where no peace has yet been established and regularly

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<sup>14</sup> Patrick J. McGowan, 'African military coups d'etat, 1956-2001: Frequency, trends and distribution,' *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 41, 3 (2003), p. 356.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel Decalo, *Africa: The lost decades* (Florida Academic Press, Gainesville, FL., 2012), p. 328.

<sup>16</sup> Samuel Decalo, 'Modalities of civil-military stability in Africa,' *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 27, 4 (1989), p. 573.

<sup>17</sup> Jimmy Kandehe, *Coups from below: Armed subalterns and state power in West Africa* (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY, 2004), p. 208.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>19</sup> Robin Luckham, 'The military, militarization and democratization in Africa: A survey of literature and issues,' *African Studies Review* 37, 2 (1994), pp. 13-75; Michael F. Lofchie, 'The Uganda coup- class action by the military,' *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 10, 1 (1972), pp. 19-35.

involve intense, combat-related conditions.<sup>20</sup> The Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (Brahimi Report) in 2000 showed evidence that ‘the current era of “complex” peacekeeping in civil-war-torn states has seen a drastic shift away from developed-country blue helmets- the standard practice during the Cold War – towards blue helmets supplied by third world states.’<sup>21</sup> While this trend has been criticized for having ‘an unpleasant mercenary flavor, whereby rich countries appear to pay soldiers from very poor countries to undertake dangerous peacekeeping jobs’ the pattern has not shifted since the Brahimi report was issued over a decade ago.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, it is an unfortunate reality that West African troops are involved in the most dangerous missions. This is an important point in the discussion of deployment-related mutinies because the risks of the mission are often part of the justification for the revolt. As the discussion below will demonstrate, the hardships and physical danger associated with the deployments often provoke an added sense of entitlement by soldiers. The risk also places heightened intensity on the importance of the grievances over equipment, training, and leadership.

While on deployment supplies, equipment, and logistics are required that would not be necessary while stationed at home. These further needs often do not coincide with additional funding and soldiers often claim that they have not received the required equipment. Additionally, the deployment environment, often to remote locations, makes resupply challenging, especially for states that lack aircraft or transportation vehicles.

However, many of the deployment grievances related to supplies and equipment are not new; instead, old complaints take on a new level of importance when they occur in a deployment setting. Soldiers commonly grumble about not having equipment or uniforms while in the barracks but these concerns become more significant when a soldier is deployed. Equipment is of limited relevance in the day-to-day lives of soldiers; however, in combat, outdated equipment or lack of supplies such as ammunition can be the difference between life and death. These equipment concerns have contributed to mutinies following internal deployments as well as peacekeeping deployments. For example, Sierra Leonean soldiers planned a revolt while deployed to counter rebel forces on the eastern border with Liberia in 1992. Their complaints included lack of equipment, uniforms, boots, food, medical care, and inconsistent pay. These were not necessarily new complaints; the government had long been neglecting the military.<sup>23</sup> However, on deployment the old complaints led to new complications on the ground for the soldiers, including casualties within the unit, and severely altered their attitudes towards the mission and their chain of command. One soldier from this unit explained that the group was ‘demoralized every time we go to battle’ due to the lack of supplies and support.<sup>24</sup> The case of Sierra Leone in 1992 shows an extreme case of the potential outcomes of neglecting deployed soldiers as the plan for a mutiny quickly escalated to a successful coup.

The material grievances that developed during the deployment were key to the revolt, but these welfare shortfalls were also viewed by the unit as a direct contradiction to the lifestyles of the senior hierarchy back in Freetown. For example, a rank and file soldier involved in the 1992 revolt described the cause of the incident in the following way: ‘We are at the warfront, we are not being paid on time, we are not well catered for, we need better medical facilities. And authorities are sitting in Freetown,

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<sup>20</sup> Norrie MacQueen, *Peacekeeping and the international system*, (Routledge, New York, NY, 2006), p. 245.

<sup>21</sup> James D. Fearon and David Laitin, ‘Neotrusteeship and the problem of weak states,’ *International Security* 28, 4 (2004), p. 25; William J. Durch, et. al. *The Brahimi Report and the future of United Nations peace operations* (Washington D.C., The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2003), p. 71.

<sup>22</sup> James D. Fearon, ‘International institutions and collective authorization of the use of force,’ in Alan Alexandroff (ed.) *Can the world be governed? Possibilities for effective multilateralism* (W. Laurier University Press, Waterloo, Ontario, 2008), p. 20.

<sup>23</sup> David Keen, *Conflict and collusion in Sierra Leone*, (Palgrave, New York, NY, 2005), p. 17; E.D.A. Turay and A. Abraham, *The Sierra Leone army*, (Macmillan, London, 1987).

<sup>24</sup> Interview, Sierra Leonean military officer, Sierra Leone, May 2011.

driving luxurious cars.’<sup>25</sup> This is similar to the narrative presented by the junior officers of the unit when they came to power. In Captain Strasser’s first speech as leader of the junta he stated, ‘our soldiers continue to sacrifice their lives on the war front in spite of very poor logistic support provided by the government, whose leadership sit in Freetown enriching themselves by gross misappropriation of war funds.’<sup>26</sup> In these examples the soldiers expressed material grievances but also a sense of injustice at their hardship conditions compared to what they viewed as excessive lifestyles of the senior hierarchy. They blamed the senior leadership for the lack of proper equipment and also specifically accused them of benefitting from the unit’s hardships.

Deployments can also expose neglect for military readiness that goes beyond material supplies and equipment. Soldiers often quickly perceived that they were not given proper training for the type of combat they experience. Similar to the concerns over equipment shortfalls, the lack of adequate training becomes intensely important and apparent in the midst of a combat scenario. Combat situations can also reveal that the unit’s ground leadership or other support elements such as intelligence lack proper training.

Insufficient training and support was a particular concern of soldiers during the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) mission to Liberia (1990-1998). As this was the first peacekeeping mission led by a sub-regional organization in Africa, part of the planning shortfalls may be attributed to the “newness” of this type of operation. ‘Funmi Olonisakin’s research with ECOMOG participants reveals how a lack of preparation and misperceptions about the severity of the conflict ‘seriously weakened’ morale amongst the soldiers.’<sup>27</sup> For example, the early stages of the mission lacked basic intelligence reports and maps. She quotes a Nigerian General who stated that in his country ‘the planners did not heed warnings at the planning stage, to prepare the troops for possible combat in Liberia.’<sup>28</sup> Rank and file soldiers backed up the General’s observation by stating that they were never given an accurate picture of the situation in Liberia. As junior soldiers made up the bulk of the deployed units, inadequate preparation or support likely had the greatest effect on the rank and file soldiers. Perceptions that they have been deceived about the nature of the mission or neglected on the deployment easily fit into common pre-existing tensions between the lowest ranks and their superiors in the region.

Another common grievance among mutineers that is unique to a deployment setting involves accusations from mutineers that they have been misled about the required length of deployment. Deployment lengths have been a key complaint in several recent mutinies and mutiny-threats. For example, Chadian troops deployed to Mali as part of MINUSMA mutinied over their length of deployment in 2013 and Sierra Leonean troops on AMISOM in Somalia publicly expressed dissatisfaction and threatened their officers over charges that they had been deployed beyond their year contract in 2014.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, a month extension beyond their deployment contract was the center of a mutiny threat by Nigerian troops deployed on the UN/AU mission to Darfur in 2012. The soldiers’ lengthy public statement reveals common themes of deployment-related mutinies. For example, they expressed a perception of dishonor at their treatment in relation to their veteran status by noting that the extension represented the government’s failure to pay ‘respect to their men and women on tour of

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<sup>25</sup> Interview, Sierra Leonean enlisted soldier, Sierra Leone, May 2011.

<sup>26</sup> *West Africa*, 11 May 1992, p. 789.

<sup>27</sup> ‘Funmi Olonisakin, *Reinventing peacekeeping in Africa: Conceptual and legal issues in ECOMOG operations* (Kluwer Law International, The Hague, 2000), p. 147.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Reuters*, ‘Chadian Troops Abandon North Mali Posts in Protest,’ 18 September 2013

<<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/18/us-mali-chad-troops-idUSBRE98H13120130918>> (8 December 2014); Kemo Cham, ‘Sierra Leone AU Troops ‘Want out of Somalia,’ *Africa Review*, 11 May 2014, <<http://www.africareview.com/News/-/979180/2310958/-/7dswu/-/index.html>> (8 December 2014).

duty.’<sup>30</sup> The mutineers accused the government of treating them ‘as if [they] are not humans’ and threatened to ‘create a scenario which will deter the ongoing peace process in Darfur’ if they were not flown home by a given date.<sup>31</sup> Similar to most deployment-related mutinies, they blamed their grievances on officer negligence and corruption. These West African examples are consistent with wider research on the psychology of international peacekeeping missions, which have shown that uncertainty in the length of deployment is one of the critical issues impacting stress levels among peacekeepers.<sup>32</sup>

### *Pay problems*

In addition to grievances surrounding equipment, training, and deployment lengths, pay is also a key complaint of most deployment-related mutinies. The pay grievances take on several different forms, the most basic being that soldiers simply have not received their due pay. At times this is directly linked to the logistical problems and hierarchies have claimed to have difficulties physically getting the salaries to soldiers.<sup>33</sup> Even when soldiers do receive their salaries, it is common for those on deployment to feel as if the amount is not adequate, particularly in relation to the deployment conditions. The greater risks associated with deployments often lead to a heightened sense of entitlement in terms of pay. Soldiers on deployment or returned from deployment believe they are due more from the government or military hierarchy as a result of their experience. These two types of pay grievances are not mutually exclusive and at times mutineers have claimed that their inadequate salaries are late.

A combination of the above pay grievances contributed to mutinies by returned ECOMOG soldiers in The Gambia in 1991 and 1992, the first mutinies the country had experienced. The mutineers both charged that they had not been paid their salaries and that the promised pay was not adequate given the hardships of the mission. For example, one former soldier explained ‘soldiers on the ground must be paid better, they were facing war every day. They should be paid more. Why would anyone risk their life for that?’<sup>34</sup> Another Gambian military interviewee noted ‘they were in real war situations, so for them to not get paid was a real problem.’<sup>35</sup> Similarly a former Gambian soldier discussing the mutinies stated, ‘soldiers felt that they were in Liberia risking their lives and still the amount of money they were expecting was not reaching them ... they were exposed to danger and ... they don’t get the money they expected.’<sup>36</sup> In these quotes, the soldiers explained that the problem was not only an issue of pay, rather the pay issues combined with the risks of the mission that made the situation unacceptable. They show that there is a recalculation of what a soldier is entitled to depending on the conditions. Danger is considered a chargeable experience and the soldiers expect to be compensated for it. In the case of the 1992 Gambian mutiny, the amount owed was relatively small, totaling US\$45 per soldier.<sup>37</sup> Gambian soldiers who were in the military at the time explained that the action was as much about perceptions of disrespect towards the recently deployed soldiers as it was about pay.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Abdulkadir Badsha and Misbahu Bashir, ‘Nigeria: Darfur Operations-Nigerian Soldiers Threaten Mutiny - Ask to be Airlifted Home,’ *Daily Trust*, 26 June 2012 <<http://allafrica.com/stories/201206260968.html>> (8 December 2014).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Amy B. Adler, Brett T. Litz, and Paul T. Bartone, ‘The nature of peacekeeping stressors,’ in Thomas W. Britt and Amy B. Adler (eds) *The psychology of the peacekeeper* (Praeger, Westport, CT, 2003), pp. 152-153.

<sup>33</sup> Olonisakin, *Reinventing Peacekeeping in Africa*, pp.178-186.

<sup>34</sup> Interview, Gambian former enlisted soldier, phone interview, October 2012.

<sup>35</sup> Interview, Gambian former military officer, phone interview, August, 2012.

<sup>36</sup> Interview, Gambian former enlisted soldier, phone interview, October 2012.

<sup>37</sup> *The Point* (The Gambia), 10 February 1992.

<sup>38</sup> Interview, Gambian former military officer, phone interview, September 2012; Interview, Gambian enlisted soldier, Banjul, May 2012; Interview, Gambian military officer, Banjul, May 2012.



Similar to most West African mutinies, the Gambian soldiers placed the blame for their grievances on the senior hierarchy. One soldier explained that the deployment pay did not reach the soldiers because 'the senior officers were robbing them.'<sup>39</sup> Another Gambian interviewee expanded on this idea by stating 'the top brass got the [deployment] money and sliced it, only gave some to the soldiers.'<sup>40</sup> These accusations were difficult to verify, but they appeared to be widely believed by soldiers and furthered existing tensions that had been building between the ranks at the time. The Gambian mutineers in 1991 demonstrated that the goals of their action went beyond just receiving their due pay by also calling for the dismissal of the country's highest ranking officer, Colonel Ndow Njie, a call to which President Jawara conceded. In the case of the Gambian mutinies, the claims by the peacekeepers were seen to both represent and perpetuate growing distrust between the junior and senior ranks.

The grievances about ECOMOG pay were not unique to the Gambian contingent. It was common for ECOMOG soldiers in Liberia to go months without payment and many remained uncompensated when they returned home. Part of the complications can be attributed to context of the ECOMOG mission to Liberia. This was the first peacekeeping venture for ECOWAS to organize and it occurred at a time when many states were experiencing major internal economic constraints. The ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee agreed 'that troops from participating countries were to be self-sufficient for the first thirty days, after which ECOWAS was to pick up the funding, but it was unable to do so.'<sup>41</sup> ECOWAS's goal of collecting fifty million dollars in donations from African states and other international donors was not met, which resulted in incomplete funding for the new force.<sup>42</sup> This may explain why countries such as The Gambia struggled to provide the extra deployment pay.

However, even in the later stages of the mission when the conflict had received more international attention and monetary contributions, funding remained a problem, often due to the complexity of the multinational, multi-organizational mission. For example, problems arose when ECOMOG soldiers were 'rehatted' into the UNMIL mission in 2003.<sup>43</sup> In 2004, soldiers from Guinea Bissau staged a mutiny demanding unpaid wages from their involvement in the ECOMIL/UNMIL mission. They accused their army chiefs of pocketing their peacekeeping payments while the army chiefs accused the UN of not paying the salaries from the transition from ECOMOG to UNMIL.<sup>44</sup>

It may be understandable that complications would arise over issues of funding in missions in which numerous nations and several international organizations are involved, yet soldiers were generally not sympathetic to the funding difficulties at the organizational level. When they were not paid on time they did not seem to question if the organization was at fault, but rather blamed their officers or others above them. This makes particular sense within a military chain of command, because officers are seen as being responsible for taking care of those who work under them. This is significant because it means delays in payments for multinational missions, regardless of who is at fault, have the potential to cause divisions and suspicions between the ranks of the contributing nation's military.

If material grievances are a key driver of deployment-related mutinies, one would hypothesize that more adequately funded peacekeeping missions such as those funded by the UN would be less likely to provoke mutinies. However, mutinies and threats to mutiny have also followed West African

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<sup>39</sup> Interview, former Gambian military officer, phone interview, August 2012.

<sup>40</sup> Interview, Gambian academic, USA, June 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Eboe Hutchful, 'The ECOMOG experience with peacekeeping in Africa,' in Mark Malan (ed.) *Whither Peacekeeping in Africa?* (Monograph No 36, Institute for Security Studies, April 1999) <<http://www.issafrica.org/Pubs/Monographs/No36/ECOMOG.html>> (8 December 2014).

<sup>42</sup> Herbert Howe, *Ambiguous order: Military forces in African states* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, CO, 2000), p. 138.

<sup>43</sup> While the original ECOMOG mission to Liberia ended in 1998, a second mission was established in 2003. However, it was soon transitioned into a UN mission.

<sup>44</sup> Mark Malan, 'Transition with minimal assistance: Lessons from Guinea-Bissau?' (Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, Accra, Paper No. 5, March 2005), pp. 14-15.

participation in UN funded missions. The material grievances in these mutinies take a slightly different angle than the grievances presented above and are related to the way salaries are allocated.

There is no shortage of soldiers volunteering to go on UN missions in West Africa, largely due to the significantly increased pay compared to what they would make stationed at home. Despite the regular pay grievances of peacekeepers, the lack of alternative economic opportunities in the region, especially for rank and file soldiers with limited advanced training or education, makes deployment on a multinational mission a coveted opportunity. Additionally, the missions provide experience that could be valuable for promotions or future job opportunities. For some, the appeal of traveling or simply breaking the routine of life in the barracks may be appealing.

It is not only soldiers and their families who benefit financially from involvement in multinational missions; the military as a whole also stands to gain. A report from the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center explains how this is the case for Ghanaian participation in UN operations:

The Government ... is reimbursed for the ordinary contingent member with an amount of \$1096 per month while for the specialist an amount of \$1399 per month is reimbursed. Considering that the ordinary contingent member is paid \$20 a day (making \$600 a month for 30 days), while provision is made for catering and some of the other provisions under self-sustainment (not readily quantifiable), the country makes significant *profits* on each ordinary contingent member and specialist that it deploys on a UN mission.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to the financial benefits, the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Canada (among others) offer training programs to African militaries contributing troops to multinational missions.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, there are lease reimbursement programs, which enable African militaries to upgrade their equipment.<sup>47</sup>

On the one hand, this may seem like a win for all, as both individuals and the country benefit, but the discrepancy between what the UN pays the country and what the individual soldiers receive has been a source of grievance among peacekeepers. The UN is very transparent about what it pays a country for peacekeepers and the \$1096/\$1399 figures are publicly available. The UN transparency contrasts with the lack of transparency usually found in the defense industry where contracts, spending, and individual pay are often not publicly available information. Countries contributing troops to multinational missions justify paying peacekeepers less than the pay allotted by the UN because there are internal expenses involved in the deployment. Additionally, it leaves the contributing country without those troops. In terms of mutinies it is less important to determine if the pay difference is justified and more important to understand how soldiers view the discrepancy.

When soldiers are unclear what the additional money from multinational missions is being used for, they often assume corruption is involved. Interviews with current soldiers in Sierra Leone illustrate this point. One soldier explained, the peacekeepers 'are not happy, they are grumbling. 1225 [US dollars] to country but we only get 400 [US dollars]. We do not know what the government is using the money for.'<sup>48</sup> In a separate interview a soldier stated:

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<sup>45</sup> Emma Birikorang, 'Ghana's regional security policy: Costs, benefits, and consistency' (Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, Accra, Paper No. 20, September 2007), p. 8.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>47</sup> Kwesi Aning, 'Unintended consequences of peace operations for troop-contributing countries from West Africa: The case of Ghana', in Aoi, de Coning and Thakur (eds) *Unintended consequences of peacekeeping operations*, pp. 135-137.

<sup>48</sup> Interview, Sierra Leonean enlisted soldier, Sierra Leone, April 2012. In 2013 the government of Sierra Leone publicly stated that its peacekeepers make \$828 per month. However, in interviews during 2011 and 2012, \$400 seemed to be the commonly rumored pay.

If you think, they [the Sierra Leone government] are making something like one million, two million dollars over six months and they are not doing anything, not buying uniforms, not buying medicine for soldiers. They are not helping those that are representing us in Darfur. They are managing it poorly. If they don't change the system it will happen.<sup>49</sup>

The 'it' in the quote is referring to a mutiny. Another Sierra Leonean soldier speculated that the officers were benefitting from the missions by noting their lifestyles which he felt could not be maintained on a regular salary.<sup>50</sup>

Similar complaints were expressed to the press by Nigerian soldiers who had participated in the MINUSMA mission in Mali in 2013. They argued that the government had not given them an explanation for why they only received part of what the UN pays for peacekeepers. They expressed their frustrations in relation to the dangers of the mission by stating 'they have cheated us after we have risked our lives, left our families for seven months.'<sup>51</sup> Another interviewed soldier put forward the common accusation that officers were benefitting from their hardship by explaining 'it is sad our *ogas* are treating us like this and feeding fat on us on the field.'<sup>52</sup>

The grievances of peacekeepers extend beyond claims of officers pocketing parts of their salary. Soldiers have also argued that the process of selection for peacekeeping missions has been corrupted. For example, soldiers in Sierra Leone alleged that in order to be selected to go on a peacekeeping mission, they are expected to pay the assigning officers 'something like ten percent ... It is a mission, if you are fortunate to go they want you to give ten percent. If you don't do it they hold up your rank, they make you relinquish your appointment.'<sup>53</sup> Similar accusations were made in the Sierra Leone media in 2013 and which the government strongly denied.<sup>54</sup> These accusations are not unique to Sierra Leone and various examples can be found throughout West African countries contributing to peacekeeping missions. The financial opportunities that are often associated with involvement in UN operations can create new avenues for perceptions of injustices. However, the new grievances follow a similar narrative based on suspicions over the gaps between the ranks.

### *Revealing the greener grass*

Another unique aspect of peacekeeping operations is the ability for soldiers to compare their conditions to those from other countries. On multinational peacekeeping operations soldiers live and work together with foreign comrades usually for extended periods of time. The individual soldiers perform the same job as their fellow peacekeepers, under similar conditions but each is paid by their home government. However, the various countries contributing troops do not pay the same amount to the soldiers they deploy. The economic conditions and cost of living between countries in the region vary widely and thus it could be expected that salaries would also vary. From the perspective of the soldiers, those that are on the lower end often view the pay difference with contempt. Soldiers compare more than just pay when on multinational missions. Differences between countries regarding uniforms, food, equipment, leadership styles, and specific country military procedures, such as the way they

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<sup>49</sup> Interview, Sierra Leonean enlisted soldier, Sierra Leone, May 2011.

<sup>50</sup> Interview, Sierra Leonean enlisted soldier, Sierra Leone, May 2011.

<sup>51</sup> Musdapha Ilo, 'Army Short Changes Nigerian Peacekeepers,' *International Centre for Investigative Reporting*, 19 October 2013, < <http://icirnigeria.org/army-short-changes-nigerian-peacekeepers/> > (8 December 2014).

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Interview, Sierra Leonean enlisted soldier, Sierra Leone, May 2011.

<sup>54</sup> Kemo Cham, 'Pay scandal rocks Sierra Leone's troops in Somalia', *Africa Review*, 17 October 2013, < <http://www.africareview.com/News/Pay-scandal-rocks-Sierra-Leone-Amison-mission/-/979180/2035956/-/10fxalx/-/index.html> > (8 December 2014).

handle casualties or schedule troop rotations, have also served as a basis for grievances among peacekeepers.

For many of the junior soldiers deployed on multinational missions it is likely their first time to extensively engage with colleagues from other countries. The new experience also brings new insights and makes some soldiers question their own conditions, particularly in comparison to others. This observation is comparable to arguments made by academics in the 1960s and 1970s that African military officers often revised their view of their expectations and roles following exposure to a wide variety of military personnel and ideas through attendance at Western military academies.<sup>55</sup> Similar patterns occurred in pre-independent Africa as well. Collective action taken by members of the *tirailleurs sénégalais* following deployments abroad during World War II is one such example.<sup>56</sup>

The ECOMOG mission to Liberia serves as a good example of the ways that grievances can arise from the ability of troops to compare themselves to contingents from other countries. As a sub-regionally led mission, it brought numerous soldiers from countries in close geographic proximity and with similar socio-economic statuses together. However, there were wide variations in the pay and conditions among the contributing countries and the differences were a key part of several mutinies that followed participation in ECOMOG. For example, a Gambian officer explained that an aspect to the 1991 and 1992 mutinies following the multinational mission in Liberia was that the soldiers 'believed they were being paid less than their counterparts from other countries.'<sup>57</sup> Similarly, mutinying peacekeepers in Burkina Faso in 1999 said they found out that the Malian peacekeepers were receiving \$610 per month for the ECOMOG mission, while they only made \$230.<sup>58</sup>

The difference in uniforms was 'one of the most glaring aspects' of differentiation between the troops in ECOMOG. The Nigerian soldiers in particular were so undersupplied and outfitted compared to the other soldiers that they often purchased uniforms from other contingents.<sup>59</sup> In Olonisakin's interviews a Nigerian officer explained that it was 'disheartening to note that of all the contingents in Ops. Liberty the Nigerian contingent is the most badly turned out.'<sup>60</sup> A rank and file Nigerian soldier stated, 'When I arrived here [Liberia], a Guinean soldier was kind enough to give me one of his uniforms. Although it was a bigger size, it was better than what I had. Other countries do not have this problem of uniform.'<sup>61</sup> In these examples, the respondents noted the condition of the Nigerians in comparison to the other contingents. The ability to see themselves next to better-outfitted soldiers seemed to add shame and anger to the situation. This was likely especially the case for Nigerians because Nigeria was funding the majority of the mission and thus one would expect its soldiers to be the best equipped, not the worst. In a military context, uniforms are much more than assigned clothing. Generally military uniforms are seen as being earned, with individuals not allowed to wear the full uniform until passing a certain level of training and tests. There are strict protocols on how to wear uniforms and discipline for those who wear it incorrectly. There is usually a high level of pride associated with military uniforms and to be denied uniforms or have uniforms in poor shape is likely to be demoralizing.

Insight into the conditions of other soldiers in the ECOMOG mission led to dissatisfaction in a variety of other areas. A former Gambian soldier argued that the Gambian contingent was undertrained

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<sup>55</sup> John Michael Lee, *African armies and civil order* (Chatto and Windus, Ltd., London, 1969), pp. 92-93; William Gutteridge, *Military regimes in Africa* (Methuen & Co Ltd., Suffolk, 1975), pp. 28-29; Ruth First, *The barrel of a gun: Political power in Africa and the coup d'etat* (Penguin Press, London, 1970), pp. 22-23.

<sup>56</sup> For more on this topic see Gregory Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (Duke University Press, Durham, NC, 2006).

<sup>57</sup> Interview, Gambian military officer, Banjul, May 2012.

<sup>58</sup> *BBC News*, 'Burkina Faso soldiers end protest,' 15 July 1999, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/395224.stm>> (8 December 2014).

<sup>59</sup> Olonisakin, *Reinventing peacekeeping in Africa*, p. 180.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

compared to other West African soldiers and other countries were more prepared to deal with casualties.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, during the ECOMOG mission, Nigerian troops frequently complained that the Ghanaian troops were eating better than them.<sup>63</sup> Morale within the ECOMOG force furthered declined when the UN and US-funded troops from Tanzania and Uganda joined an 'expanded' ECOMOG. These East African troops received three times the original ECOMOG pay, as well as better provisions.<sup>64</sup> Mutineer grievances that stemmed from the ability of troops to evaluate the conditions of other troops highlights the framework that mutinies generally involve both a material grievance and a sense of injustice. In these examples, soldiers expressed their desire for better pay or uniforms but the claims were made in comparison to others. They suggested that the disparities between themselves and others troops on the same mission were an insult.

### *Cohesion and division*

While the previous sections have described the types of grievances that often develop during deployments, it is also possible that the deployment setting contributes to the development of a mutiny by altering the dynamics of the unit. In the most basic sense, deployed soldiers are physically separated from the larger military organization. Units may feel freer to discuss or plan a mutiny away from the watchful eyes of their senior hierarchy. Beyond the issue of distance from their home bases, deployments often lead to strong group cohesion.<sup>65</sup> During deployments 'members are immediately known to each other and their actions are interdependent, mutually supporting, and reciprocal'.<sup>66</sup> Soldiers deployed together are in constant contact with each other, not only during intense combat situations, but also during the long mundane downtime, which inevitably occurs on deployments. In more recent years with the increase in peacekeeping missions, units will often spend months together prior to the deployment in preparatory training. These shared experiences of hardships as well as the consistent close proximity often create close interpersonal bonds between members of the unit which may be absent or weakened when stationed at home.

Military scholars regularly discuss cohesion in relation to its ability to create more efficient and motivated units. Anthony King explains that there is a common presumption that the close personal relationships formed within cohesive units 'generate good performances because it motivates the individual members to fight'.<sup>67</sup> However, he draws on various studies that show a darker side of cohesion, one that can motivate individuals into deviant behavior together. The close bonds can cause the group to subvert or ignore their authorities as well as their obligation to the organization. Guy Siebold explains that highly cohesive units may be particularly likely to disobey orders when 'peer bonding is strong and bonding with leaders is poor'.<sup>68</sup> The deployment experience can increase the peer bonding as well as the divisions between the deployed soldiers and their leadership based at home, increasing the likelihood of disobedience. King cites cases of Western mutinies such as French and Australian troops during World War I and American troops during the Vietnam War among his various

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<sup>62</sup> Samsudeen Sarr, *Coup d'etat by the Gambia national army* (Xlibris, Philadelphia, PA, 2007), p. 120.

<sup>63</sup> Hutchful, 'The ECOMOG experience with peacekeeping in Africa'.

<sup>64</sup> Olonisakin, *Reinventing peacekeeping in Africa*, p. 194. The initial ECOMOG pay rate was \$5 per day, although troops often did not receive the full pay for a variety of reasons.

<sup>65</sup> Guy L. Siebold, 'The essence of military group cohesion', *Armed Forces & Society* 33, 2 (2007), p. 288.

<sup>66</sup> Anthony King, *The combat soldier: Infantry tactics and cohesion in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013), p. 18.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p.31.

<sup>68</sup> Siebold, 'The essence of military group cohesion,' p. 293.

examples of deviant military behavior among combat units.<sup>69</sup> African deployment-related mutinies can be added to this list of indiscipline, which are also likely affected by increased group cohesion.

Mutinies are a unique dynamic in that they often involve both a strong bond within the group as well as a level of detachment from the larger organization. Mutinies require trust within the group as they must have faith that the individuals will stick together during negotiations or a potential counter attack. Shared deployment experiences may enhance this trust. However, in addition to the increased group cohesion, the experience may also lead to feelings of division, isolation, and dissatisfaction from the larger military hierarchy. The division between those that have deployed and those that have not also largely follows the rank structure, as combat deployments consist mostly of rank and file soldiers led by junior officers. Senior officers are much less likely to engaged in deployments or combat. This division builds on the often significant economic divisions between the junior ranks and senior officers in West Africa, which has been described throughout this article.

This kind of “unified division” may be particularly explosive when combined with the deployment selection process in some African states. For example, President Abacha in Nigeria was accused of having used ‘ECOMOG postings to get rid of troublesome units and officers.’<sup>70</sup> This pattern extends beyond Nigeria to other states with bloated militaries. Multinational missions can serve as a ‘release valve’ by stationing a portion of the military outside the country for a period of time.<sup>71</sup> This type of selection process is likely to be particularly risky in relation to mutinies, as soldiers who are already weary of the government or military hierarchy may become further discontented by unfulfilled expectations from the mission.

## *Conclusion*

This article has contributed new findings to the study of mutinies in Africa as well as the unintended consequences of peacekeeping. Participation in peacekeeping missions is often considered to be a way to provide troops with additional experience and pay, while also contributing to regional stability. However, the analysis presented here indicates that at times grievances developed on the deployment can lead to mutinies within the ranks and exacerbate existing tensions that have been prevalent in West African militaries.

Examples of deployment-related mutinies demonstrate that mutinies generally involve the interplay of material grievances and a sense of injustice. In deployment-related mutinies the perception of injustice is closely linked to a heightened expectation of respect for combat veterans. Alongside demands for material redress is often language that speaks of the desire to defend the honor of those that have served their country in life-threatening scenarios. While West African states have become increasingly involved in multinational missions, the propensity for deployment-related mutinies should not be seen as merely linked to the number of deployed troops. Instead, the deployment grievances build on existing tensions and suspicions between the senior and junior ranks in many militaries in the region. Deployments, and peacekeeping deployments in particular, may provide new avenues for material grievances, but the underlying accusations against the senior military hierarchy are part of a wider regional and historic narrative. Deployments often serve to exacerbate tensions between the ranks as the hardship and danger associated with deployments are experienced mostly by junior soldiers and

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<sup>69</sup> King, *The combat soldier*, p. 32.

<sup>70</sup> Hutchful, ‘The ECOMOG experience with peacekeeping in Africa’.

<sup>71</sup> Elizabeth Dickinson, ‘For tiny Burundi, big returns in sending peacekeepers to Somalia’, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 22 December 2011, <<http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2011/1222/For-tiny-Burundi-big-returns-in-sending-peacekeepers-to-Somalia>> (8 December 2014).

place them at particular odds with senior hierarchies stationed back home. Additionally, new or existing grievances are intensified under conditions that place the lives of soldiers at risk.

While the West African region may be prone to mutinies and other military indiscipline, the impact of deployment grievances, the ability to compare conditions with foreign contingents, and deployment-linked unit cohesion, are applicable to deployed units beyond West Africa. Thus, lessons learned from West African deployment-related mutinies can be valuable warnings for other regions. Mutinies are often viewed as singular events but their negative implications on military and state stability should not be overlooked. Deployment-related grievances in West Africa have led directly to coups, for example the case of Sierra Leone in 1992, and have intensified divisions that became contributing factors in coups, for example the mutinies that preceded the coup in Gambia in 1994. In the case of a peacekeeping related mutiny in Nigeria in 2008, the army acknowledged that the incident continued to have 'negative implications on the morale and disposition' of the military ranks 'towards one another' even after years had passed.<sup>72</sup> Understanding common grievances and dynamics that attribute to deployment-related mutinies can serve as the first step to developing ways to reduce them, a goal that governments, military leaders, and even rank and file soldiers would likely support.

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<sup>72</sup> *NigeriaWorld*, 'Mutiny: Army retired indicted senior officers', 21 October 2009, <<http://www.nigeriannewsservice.com/mutiny-army-retires-indicted-senior-officers/>> (8 December 2014).